

THE FINAL REPORT.

RENDERED BY THE AUDITING COMMITTEE
LAST FRIDAY NIGHT.The Whole Matter Submitted to the
Township Committee Without Recommen-
dation.

In the beginning of the last township year it was brought to the attention of the Township Committee that the accounts of the township were not kept in a proper manner; that several parties claimed that they had paid their taxes, but had not received credit for the same; that no cash book was kept in the Collector's office; and that the cash had not been balanced in many years. The Auditing Committee was thereupon directed to investigate these matters, and also the whole system of township book-keeping, and to recommend any needed reform.

The Auditing Committee, after an investigation of the township books and several interviews with various township officials, reported in part as follows: "No improvement in the methods pursued by the Treasurer and Clerk are suggested. The bookkeeping of the Collector's department, however, deserves the severest condemnation and should be changed without delay. In order to relieve the Township Committee of the responsibility of permitting a system, or rather lack of system, which offers such unlimited opportunity for carelessness and dishonesty, that loss to the township and discredit if not dishonor to township officers is ever possible, if not probable.

"In order to reduce the possibilities of the loss of public money to a minimum we would suggest the following system:

"(a) Let the Collector be charged, as at present, with the full amount of the tax-levy. Let him be required to keep a cash book showing the items of his daily receipts and disbursements, each item specifying the name, amount, and general nature of the transaction; that is to say, when a tax bill is paid let the cash book show the date of payment, the taxpayer's name, the year's taxes paid, the amount of discounts or interest and costs, and the total amount received; if a sidewalk bill be paid, let the cash book show the name of the owner of the premises, the situation of the premises, the number of feet laid, the amount paid, and the date of payment. There should also be appropriate references to the tax duplicate, sidewalk assessment book, arrearage book, etc. The cash book should also show the amounts paid County Collector and Township Treasurer and the School Board disbursements.

"(b) There should be an arrearage book in the nature of a personal ledger, an account being opened with every taxpayer. At a certain period every year all unpaid taxes for that year should be carried from the duplicate to the arrearage book, and the taxpayer being debited with the unpaid tax of that year. The Treasurer should then take the names of all delinquent taxpayers from the arrearage book with the amount due and publish them in the newspaper. At the end of two years the property should be sold, and in addition to the legal advertisement notice should be served on the taxpayer whose property is to be sold. When a piece of property is sold at the expiration of any two years, the costs may simply be charged against the property in the arrearage book.

"(c) In case back taxes shall be paid, the amount necessary to clear the property can be ascertained in a moment by turning to the account of the person whose name they are taxed, taking the amount of back taxes charged and comparing interest to date of payment. The amount paid will be the taxes and costs already entered in the arrearage book plus a third. This amount will be entered in the cash book and will be offset in the arrearage book, and entry will then be made on the debit side of the account to balance.

"(d) If the property changes hands the name of the new owner will replace that of the old and the count go on as before. As lots are sold off from larger pieces, new accounts of course will be opened with the owners of the lots if the taxes be unpaid. We will not here go into the details of the various book-keeping devices necessary to be resorted to in cases of change of ownership of property; it suffices to say it can be easily provided for.

"(e) There should be a sidewalk assessment book and a sidewalk book serving the same purpose in the matter of sidewalk assessments and repairs which the duplicate serves in the case of taxes. A cash book and arrearage book kept as above indicated, tax items being posted from the cash book into the duplicate and into the arrearage book if unpaid after a certain date, and other items into their appropriate book, will compel the Collector to rightly account for all moneys received, and will show in a plain and simple manner the

ed the right amount, because the amount received must be the face of the taxes minus discount or plus interest and costs at the date of payment, computing from the time taxes became payable. If an allowance be made by the Township Committee, the arrearage book should refer to the date of the resolution making the same. The only open element in the system is the truth of the showing of the arrearage book that certain taxes remain unpaid; but the two advertisements and the notice provided for above would seem to render the chance of falsification of the arrearage book practically impossible.

As regards past transactions the Committee recommended the employment of an expert bookkeeper for two purposes:

First—The verification of the Collector's books as they stand.

Second—The opening of a new set of books, starting the arrearage book with all back taxes shown to be unpaid by the present books.

And the Committee also recommended that the correctness of the arrears of taxes should be ascertained from the taxpayers themselves.

The Committee also stated that no cash book having been kept in the past, and the duplicate not showing dates of payment or deductions from or additions to the amount of tax, we do not see how anything more can be done towards ascertaining whether the Collector has accounted for all moneys received, or whether without authority he has made deductions.

Upon the rendering of this report the Township Committee authorized the employment of an expert. The Committee subsequently reported in part as follows: That after a careful investigation it had employed Mr. Richard F. Stevens. At the request of the Committee he made a preliminary inspection of the Collector's books, and gave as his opinion that it would be impossible to ascertain what was due and owing the township or to inaugurate a proper system of accounts without going over the Collector's books from the very beginning. This view corresponding with those that the Committee was compelled to take from its own careful investigation, the expert was told to begin work. The Committee also said at that time, "It is but just to Mr. Marr to state that his system is neither better nor worse than that of his predecessors in office. Why it has been permitted to so long exist is utterly unaccountable."

The results of the expert's work are embodied in his own reports on file, and a summary of these results will also be found in the last report of the Auditing Committee. One feature of the methods pursued in the Collector's department was developed which was unknown to the Committee at the time of its reports, viz.: that the Collector had kept a series of tax-receipt books, in which he entered amounts received, but without dates of receipt. Had these books been accurately kept they would have furnished the groundwork for accurate results, but in point of fact hundreds of taxes, amounting in all to the grand sum of \$10,000.00, were marked paid upon the duplicate and not entered in any receipt book. Here then exists an element of uncertainty which can never be cured, for at this late day it cannot be proved whether when "Paid" was marked opposite the tax the Collector received more or less than the face of the tax. That is to say, there is no means of knowing whether when the taxpayer paid the tax he was allowed deductions or charged interest.

The Committee wishes to say in this connection that the work of the expert and the investigation of the Committee, not only show no evidence of any desire on the part of Mr. Marr to hold back from the Township what was justly due it, but on the contrary present the very strongest, not to say conclusive, evidence of the strict integrity on the part of Mr. Marr. He has made as many and great errors against himself as he has against the township.

After the rendering of the report of the expert and the Committee last referred to, copies of all the exhibits and reports were placed in the disposal of Mr. Marr. He has made an opportunity of examining all the exhibits and evidence. In the meantime the Committee had been sent to all taxpayers and the Collector's books showed to be in arrears. No responses having been received from a great number, Mr. Horace Dodd was appointed to look up all delinquent taxpayers and verify the Collector's books. The result of the laborious investigation by Mr. Dodd showed that taxes to the amount of \$534.65 had been received by the Collector and not credited. Mr. Marr has met with the Auditing Committee and the Township Committee a number of times.

As a statement of Mr. Marr is here presented showing 174 items in schedule A which the Committee recommended to be referred to Mr. Marr. They are all cases in which Mr. Marr has contributed on page twenty.

IMPROVEMENT BONDS.

VIEWS OF MANY TAXPAYERS ON THIS SUBJECT.

A Majority of Those Interviewed Favor Bonding the Township For Substantial Improvement.

During the past week THE CITIZEN has interviewed a large number of Bloomfield's prominent taxpayers on the subject of bonding the town. The result is given below:

Halsey M. Barrett—I see no way of meeting the obligations which the township has assumed under the joint contract for a trunk sewer to be used in common with the city of Orange and the township of Montclair, other than by the issue of bonds for whatever amount the necessities of the case shall require. I am opposed to bonding the township for other local purposes, because where that method of deferred payment is once adopted, the temptation to pursue it seems irresistible. I am willing to vote for annual appropriations for roads, sidewalks, and other local purposes to any amount which the judgment of my fellow citizens shall pronounce to be wise and prudent. I regard debts as an unmitigated curse to an individual or to a community, and think it important to avoid them as far as we can do so.

William A. Baldwin, when asked if he favored bonding the town, answered: "No, at present I cannot say that I am. Roads are a very great attraction to intending residents, but they may be secured at too great a sacrifice. The present method of building stone roads is necessarily slow. The cost of six or eight-inch macadam is about one dollar per running foot, that is \$5,000 per mile, we will say. Last year we raised for building stone roads \$8,000 and for repairs of stone roads \$2,000 additional. This appropriation, it will be seen, will build about one and one-half miles of road per year, and repair say one mile more. Now there are, I am told, sixty miles of road in the township. Thus it will readily be seen we are progressing very slowly at present. Then let us bond, some will say. Well, bonds are laid upon the whole township. To build sixty miles of roads will cost \$300,000 at \$50 per mile. We have about \$40,000 already invested in stone roads. Then there will need to be expended \$260,000 to permit the whole township to share the benefits. The interest on this large sum is \$13,000 per year and a large sum additional will be needed to keep the roads in repair, besides meeting payments on the principal."

Amzi Dodd—The vague question of bonding the township is one on which I am not prepared to express an opinion.

James C. Beach—I presume the question of bonding the township will come up before the town meeting. There are a great many questions involved with it that would have to be carefully considered. If we undertake a system of road construction we must see that the roads are properly made. Mr. Beach said it would be impossible to undertake a bonding scheme that would embrace the whole sixty miles of roads in the township.

George W. Cook—I do not think that we ought to undertake any extensive system of road improvements until we put sewers in our streets. If we undertake to bond the town for the purpose of making stone roads we will have to do it for such an amount that will cover the whole town.

Seymour P. Gilbert—I am in favor of almost any plan that will give us good roads, but prefer paying as we go to bonding, when it can be done without increasing our tax rate. In 1891 our tax levy was increased about \$1,700 over 1890 without increasing our tax rate for 1891 over 1890. Sixty-five hundred dollars of this increase was for special purposes. Keep down the other appropriations, add this amount to our stone road appropriation of \$4,000 of 1891 and we have \$14,500. Add to this \$5,000 (this is \$2,250 less than we added to our tax levy last year) and we have \$20,000 to spend on roads without increasing our taxes.

Joseph Dodd—I have had some of the most prominent taxpayers in the Township Committee. I would be willing to have the question of bonding referred to them.

Lewis K. Dodd—I favor bonding, and believe it would lower the taxes.

Joseph D. Gallagher—In view of the fact that Glen Ridge is endeavoring to separate from Bloomfield, and may possibly effect it, I do not care to express an opinion on a matter in which I would probably have no interest.

Dr. White thinks it is too early yet to bond the town; did not think local sewerage was needed.

William Colfax—I think bonding is the only thing we can do if we are to get improvements as rapidly as we need them. Our principal need is good roads, well constructed.

Edward Baldwin—Once we enter into a bonding scheme there is no telling

where we will come out. The outlet sewer is an entering wedge. We were told it would cost \$30,000; the general opinion is that it will cost us far in excess of that sum.

Charles H. Halfpenny says to bond the town is the right thing to do.

Francis Law favors bonding, providing it is for a sufficient sum to apply generally all over the town, and the money to be expended for a superior quality of work; thinks the present method of road construction very unsatisfactory.

James E. Ellor favors bonding for a sufficient sum to macadamize all the streets in the town; does not approve of the quality of work recently done.

W. B. Corby thinks the town could be greatly improved by bonding.

Ell Harris would want to know full particulars as to amount and how it was proposed to spend it before expressing an opinion; thinks the present method is good enough for several years yet. With a large sum of money in their hands, he thinks the town officials would not exercise the same economy in expending it as under the present system.

J. F. Scherff favors bonding for hard roads, sewers, electric lights and all kinds of public improvements; thinks it will induce people to take up their residence here; thinks the present policy pursued in road construction a very poor one; roads do not last any time.

Lewis Dawkins—Bonding is the best thing that can be done; it is necessary for the future growth of the town.

Reuben N. Dodd favors bonding, and thinks it ought to have been done several years ago.

Frank S. Benson is opposed to any bonding at present; feels that it would be unfair to Glen Ridge.

Geo. H. Sedgwick—Whether I favor bonding or not depends on what they propose to do with the money. If they are going to macadamize all the streets with the money, I do favor it; if it is proposed to macadamize only a few streets and compel everybody to pay for it, I do not. I believe that the cost of all road and sidewalk improvements should be levied directly on the property benefited.

Charles W. Martin declined to be quoted on the subject at present.

E. D. Ackerman favors bonding for roads and sewers.

Tax Collector A. C. Marr is heartily in favor of bonding for substantial improvements.

David Post favors bonding; considers the natural facilities of this town equal to any of the Oranges, and with good roads property here would bring just as good a price as Orange property.

Arthur Spragg favors bonding for three things—roads, sewerage, and a town hall.

Thomas Flannery favors bonding for roads, but not for such light roads as those lately constructed; suggests bonds of small denomination so that people in the town can have a chance to invest in them.

Joseph A. Peloubet—I am in favor of bonding for roads and sewerage. It will lower our tax rate. The present amount spent on road construction would pay the interest on the bonds and the requirements of a sinking fund; but we must have good roads and no more patch work.

Wm. R. Hall—I am heartily in favor of bonding for hard roads.

William Baggart favors bonding; thinks it is the cheapest method of making improvements.

James Crisp, sr.—I think \$500,000 ought to be raised for public improvements.

Dr. W. H. Van Gieson favors bonding for roads and sewerage.

Lemuel B. Voorhees—This town is behind others in some respects, and especially in the matter of roads. I think that some years ago we should have adopted a better system of road improvement.

Robert M. Stiles thinks that to bond the town for road construction would be a good thing to do, but care must be taken that the work is properly done.

Joseph Reinheimer thinks the bonding system the most economical for carrying on improvements.

Rudolph Bruett—If it is proposed to do good work on the roads and finish them up with curbing and sidewalks, I favor bonding for a liberal amount.

George M. Wood—I favor bonding and think the matter ought to have been voted three months ago, so that it could come up before the town meeting and be discussed intelligently. I am a little behind in my opinion. While I might be wise to bond for road construction purposes, I would not bond for such work as has been done in Washington Avenue.

James D. Cooper—I favor bonding for such an amount as will give us good roads all through the township.

Guustav Bruett favors bonding for roads.

George Peterson—I favor bonding for roads and sewerage; I do not think it is right for the present generation of taxpayers to bear the burden of improvements that future generations will enjoy the benefits.

Fred. Hackel favors bonding for road construction.

THE SPECIAL MEETING.

JOS. L. MUNN CLAIMS THE TOWN OWES
MR. MARR OVER \$1,400.The Committee Adjourned Without Taking
Any Action on the Reports—To
Meet Next Wednesday.

Town Committeemen Gilbert, Halfpenny, Rayner, and Selbert were the only members present at the special meeting held last Friday night to hear the final report of the Auditing Committee. The Township Counsel was present, also Tax Collector A. C. Marr, with his counsel, Joseph L. Munn.

Mr. Halfpenny read the report of the Auditing Committee, which on motion of Mr. Rayner was received. The report is given in full in another column.

Mr. Munn addressed the Committee in behalf of his client, Mr. Marr. Mr. Munn said that he assumed that the Committee was to settle the questions that had arisen in connection with the township finances. The main object was to get to a point where they could act. Referring to the work of Mr. Stevens, Mr. Munn said that he knew of no man who had a better reputation as an expert accountant. The reports furnished by Mr. Stevens attested the fidelity of his work. The investigation Mr. Stevens had been called upon to make was very different from that of investigating a set of books in a bank or mercantile house.

Tax accounts were largely problematical. Mr. Marr on assuming the office of Collector had pursued the method in vogue for many previous years.

Mr. Munn spoke of the courtesies extended to himself and Mr. Marr by the Auditing Committee, and also of the fact that they had been kindly furnished with manuscript notes and other material of Mr. Stevens's elaborate work. The meetings with the Auditing Committee had been of a very friendly character, and the only object in view had been to get at the facts in the case.

Mr. Munn stated the investigation pursued by himself did not consist of a complete review of Mr. Stevens's work. In reference to the differences between a statement prepared by Mr. Munn and the report of Mr. Stevens, Mr. Munn said that Mr. Stevens's report indicated where they might be found. Exhibit D of Mr. Stevens's report, he said, disclosed a number of them. Mr. Munn said he did not think it was fair to characterize the differences as errors on the part of the Collector. Some of them are errors, as were also some items in Mr. Stevens's report. Mr. Stevens, he said, did not claim infallibility, and there were mistakes in his work.

"Mistakes have been made by your Collector," said Mr. Munn, "and we stand ready to have errors corrected."

Some of the mistakes with which Mr. Marr is charged, Mr. Munn said, were the fault of the Assessor, and for some others the Collector, the Assessor, and the Town Committee were jointly responsible, and it was not fair to charge them up to Mr. Marr in particular.

Mr. Munn said that the great source from which the differences arose was due to a practice that prevailed in this town, and which he had not seen in any other town for the past three or four years. On the margin of the duplicate was written an "X" or the word "paid" against a taxpayer's name. Mr. Munn said that both the sign and the word were open to various interpretations. In some instances it meant that the man charged with a tax was exempt; in others that a settlement had been made; in others an error in assessment.

Mr. Munn said he had no criticism to make of Mr. Stevens's course in treating all these instances as cash paid to Mr. Marr and charging them against him.

Mr. Munn devoted much time to explaining a list of items furnished by Mr. Stevens of amounts paid which did not appear in the cash book. Some of the items, Mr. Munn said, the Auditing Committee agreed ought to be allowed Mr. Marr; others, such as appeared in schedule B, Mr. Munn said, involved an exercise of judgment which the Auditing Committee did not care to assume the responsibility of exercising. He gave the Committee his view of the items in schedule B.

Mr. Munn gave the following figures as his summary of the condition of the accounts:

IN FAVOR OF MR. MARR.
Exhibit No. 1 of Mr. Stevens's report.
A. Cash paid to Mr. Marr \$1,707.00
B. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
C. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
D. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
E. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
F. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
G. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
H. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
I. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
J. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
K. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
L. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
M. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
N. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
O. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
P. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
Q. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
R. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
S. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
T. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
U. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
V. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
W. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
X. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
Y. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00
Z. Cash paid to Mr. Stevens \$1,707.00

Some discussion followed the method pursued by Mr. Stevens in arriving at the results given in his report.

As Mr. Stevens was not present to explain, and those present could only conjecture, Mr. Munn gave his view as to the probable method pursued by Mr. Stevens.

The discussion then turned on what

basis should be adopted as a starting point of settlement.

Mr. Rayner asked if the Auditing Committee had any recommendation to offer.

Mr. Halfpenny said they had not.

Mr. Gilbert suggested the adoption of Mr. Stevens's report as a basis of settlement.

Mr. Munn objected on the ground that Mr. Stevens's report embodied a number of conjectures and opinions. For instance, it was Mr. Stevens's opinion that Mr. Marr collected interest on \$10,000, which after a number of years would amount to a good deal.

The Town Counsel said that the difference between Mr. Marr and the accountant seemed to be in the matter of "overs." The counsel said the question for the Committee to decide resolved itself into one of who was entitled to them, Mr. Marr or the town.

Mr. Munn objected to a settlement on that basis, as under it Mr. Marr was kindly invited to assume the burden of proof.

The Committee adjourned to meet March 2, when the matter will again be taken up.

"Old Glory" Did Not Wave.

On the morning of Fourth of July last Watessing was alive with patriotism. A new flag was flung to the breeze amid great enthusiasm. The glory of the stars and stripes was the theme of speech and song. The spectator who would have dared to insinuate that the ebullience of patriotism was a mere passing transport would have been promptly knocked down. Alas! experience has demonstrated that the reflective spectator would have been in the right. Patriotism has apparently winked out in Watessing, for on Washington's Birthday a bare pole greeted the eyes of those who passed through the centre. In every nook and corner of the land where liberty has a votary a flag should be displayed in honor of the name that is synonymous with liberty—the name of Washington. The people of Watessing should institute an inquiry and fix the responsibility for this failure to unfurl the flag. It is more than probable that some one individual is to blame for an act that reflects on the whole community. The esteem manifested by the cosmopolitan population of Watessing for Kosciuszko, Kosuth, Bismarck, John Bull, Napoleon Bonaparte, and St. Patrick is all very creditable, but Americans should honor the name of Washington, whose memory will be adored when others shall have been forgotten.

Reopening of the Baptist Church.

The improvements in the main audience rooms of the Baptist Church are about completed, and the church is in many respects a new building. Arrangements are being made for the reopening services to be held on Sunday, March 6. The Sunday services will be followed by meetings of a social character on the three following days. On Monday the local churches are invited to join in the season of rejoicing. Tuesday is to be Young People's day. Wednesday is to be Members' day, with a sermon by the Rev. D. D. McLaurin of New York at 4.30 P. M., followed by a collection and members' roll-call. The full programme will be given next week.

We Promised to Leave Town.

Officer Baylis observed three suspicious-looking men going in and out of various houses on Spruce Street on Wednesday, one of whom had his arm in a sling. The officer approached the man and asked him what he was selling, at the same time taking him by the bandaged arm and finding out there was nothing the matter with it. The man jumped a fence and rolled over the embankment. Baylis captured him, but released him upon his promising to get out of town. There has been a number of suspicious-looking strangers about lately.

The Rev. Mr. Flamer to be Married.

The engagement is announced of the Rev. Arnold W. Flamer, formerly of this place and now pastor of the Hopkins Street German Presbyterian Church and editor of the *Evangelist*, to a young lady member of a church in Cincinnati of which he was the pastor. The marriage ceremony will take place in Cincinnati shortly after Easter.

Watessing N. E. Sunday-School.

An entertainment consisting of solos, glee, choruses, readings, recitations, dialogues, etc., will be given by the members of the Sunday-school on Wednesday evening, March 3, in the church for the benefit of the Sunday-school library. Doors open at 7 o'clock. Admission, adults, 25c.; children, 10c.

Election at School Trustees.

The postponement of the township election to April 19 will result in the postponement of the election of School Trustees to April 19. The terms of Messrs. William A. Baldwin, Thomas Oakley and Francis Law expire.